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ABSTRACT

This study investigated effects of gender, emotion, and family expressiveness on preschool children's reactions to narrative characters' emotion expressions. Forty-five preschool children rank-ordered playmate preferences for male and female story characters who expressed happiness, anger, sadness, fear, and neutrality and indicated how much they liked such characters. The effect of children's family expressive environments on their responses was also assessed. Findings indicated that liking ratings were based solely on the nature of the emotion being expressed, with happy characters being liked the most and angry characters the least. Children did base some of their playmate preference rankings of the characters on gender stereotypes of emotion expression, and family expressiveness played a role in these preferences, with children from low-expressive homes making gender-stereotypic preferences more than children from high-expressive homes. (Contains 44 references.) (Author/EV)

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Playmate Preferences of Preschoolers: The influence of Emotion, Gender, and Family Expressiveness

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Footnote

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Abstract

Effects of gender, emotion, and family expressiveness on preschool children's reactions to narrative characters' emotion expressions were investigated in this study. Forty-five preschool children rank-ordered playmate preferences for and indicated how much they liked male and female story characters who expressed happiness, anger, sadness, fear, and neutrality. The effect of children's family expressive environments on their responses was also assessed. Results indicated that liking ratings were based solely on the nature of the emotion being expressed, with happy characters being liked the most and angry characters the least. Children did base some of their playmate preference rankings of the characters on gender stereotypes of emotion expression, and family expressiveness played a role in these preferences with children from low-expressive homes making gender-stereotypic preferences more than children from high-expressive homes.

Playmate Preferences of Preschoolers: The Influence of Emotion, Gender, and Family Expressiveness

Children, like adults, understand that expressing the emotions they feel is not always viewed as appropriate and their behavior often reflects this understanding. Research has found that preschool age children report both understanding and using display rules in their interactions with others (e.g., Banerjee, 1997; Saarni, 1979). An important question regards how children develop their display rule knowledge.

Since children tend to spend the majority of their early years in the family environment, research has focused on family socialization as a means through which display rule knowledge is acquired (e.g., Radke-Yarrow & Kochanska, 1990; Fivush, 1989; Casey & Fuller, 1994; Cervantes & Callanan, 1998). Less attention has been given to another important socialization influence in children's lives, the peer environment. The primary goal of this study was to investigate children's reactions to the emotional expressions of hypothetical peers to gain a better understanding of how peer socialization contributes to the socialization of emotion expressions.

The basic factor that influences the socialization of emotion expressions is the fundamental function of the emotion being expressed. Based on the functional perspective of emotion, emotion expressions are significant components of the emotion process in that they serve important functions for an individual, both intrapersonally and interpersonally (Barrett, 1993). One interpersonal function of emotion expressions is that each is associated with a signal or message that communicates one's status regarding his goal attainment. Based on the nature of the goal and subsequent signal communicated by an expression, there may be different interpersonal ramifications for different emotion expressions. Therefore, the expression of some

emotions may be more desirable to those on the receiving end of the expression than other emotions, and display rules may emerge based on these differences.

Research examining children's reported willingness to express positive and negative emotions supports this premise. Underwood (1997) found children in second, fourth, and sixth grades reported being more expressive of happiness to others and reported being less expressive of sadness, disappointment, embarrassment, and anger. Anger was the emotion they were least likely to express to others. Research has also examined children's perceptions of their emotion-expressing peers. As expected based on these communicative signals, happy children are viewed as more popular and enjoyable to play with by other children (Sroufe, Schork, Molti, & LaFreniere, 1984), while children prefer not to interact with angry children (Rubin & Clark, 1983) and attach a negative stigma to sad children (Glasberg & Aboud, 1981).

These findings suggest that the communicative nature of the emotion that is being expressed does lead to differential perceptions by other children, but the question remains as to how the nature of the emotion expression influences children's behavior toward their peers. Additionally, the message that is communicated by an emotion expression may not be the only factor that influences children's perceptions. The consistency of the expression with gender stereotypes of emotion may also play a role.

The probability of this second factor is likely when considering research on preschool children's awareness of the gender stereotypes surrounding emotion expression (Birnbaum, Nosanchuk, & Croll, 1980; Brody, 1984; Karbon, Fabes, Carlo, & Martin, 1992). Specifically they associate anger with maleness, while believing happiness, sadness, and fear are all emotions more typically expressed by females. These findings for the expression of anger, sadness, and happiness are consistent with those found in older children and adults.

In addition, children also acknowledge that the consequences of expressing certain emotions co-vary depending on the situation and regulate their behavior accordingly. Underwood, Coie, and Herbsman (1992) examined display rules for anger and found that girls between the ages of 8 and 11 reported masking their facial expressions of anger more than boys of the same age reported. Fuchs and Thelen (1988) found similar findings among six- through 11-year-old children's reported expressions of anger and sadness and thoughts on how others would respond to their anger and sad expressions. In general, the results of this study suggest that there may be different socialization practices occurring for boys and girls regarding the expression of sadness and anger, with the expression of sadness being encouraged among females and discouraged among males, while the opposite occurs for anger expressions.

Socialization of Emotion Expressions

Socialization in the Family Environment

In examining the socialization of emotion expressions in children, research has typically focused on parental socialization and has examined which emotion expressions are socialized and how parents communicate their display rule beliefs. Through their interactions, parents are found to socialize emotion expression in their children beginning as early as infancy (e.g., Cole, 1985; Malatesta & Haviland, 1982; Tronick & Cohn, 1989), and this continues throughout development (e.g., Cervantes & Callanan, 1998; Denham, 1993; Garner, Robertson, & Smith, 1997).

The nature of this socialization is often consistent with gender-emotion stereotypes. A study conducted by Fivush (1989) with 30- to 35-month-old children, looked at the use of emotion terms in mother-child conversations. One finding was that the mothers did not discuss anger with their daughters while they did with their sons. Also, when discussing sadness there

was more discussion with daughters than with sons. Another study with 24- to 48-month-old children supported the socialization of the expression of anger in boys and sadness in girls (Radke-Yarrow & Kochanska, 1990). Mothers in this study responded in reinforcing ways to their son's expression of anger while ignoring or reinforcing the inhibition of it in their daughters. Therefore, it appears that many parents treat their children in ways that support the expression of sadness in girls and anger in boys and inhibit these same expressions in the opposite sex.

A more indirect way in which the socialization of emotion expressions occurs in the family environment is through family expressiveness. Expressiveness can be defined as ".. a persistent pattern of exhibiting emotional expressions in a variety of socioemotional situations, and our judgments about a person's style of expressiveness are based on aggregates of that individual's emotion expressions over time and across situations" (Halberstadt, 1991, p. 107). One facet of an individual's life that can influence the development of her expressiveness style is her family. Research indicates that children develop the expressiveness style that is exhibited by other family members (see Halberstadt, 1991 for a review). Specifically research has found that those raised in families in which low expressiveness is valued and exhibited similarly tend to exhibit low expressive styles; while those from high expressive families exhibit expressive styles that are also high in expressiveness.

Based on the family expressiveness literature, this study was designed to provide more insight into the role of family expressiveness in children's perceptions of their peers' emotion expressions. The expressive style of the family may affect the degree of acceptance that a child has for emotion expressions. More specifically, we thought that the expressiveness background of a child's home environment might influence how he or she socializes gender-emotion

stereotypes of expressions. In a family in which emotions are openly and frequently expressed, children may, through their observations, learn that expressing the full range of emotions is acceptable and subsequently rely less on gender-emotion stereotypes for their beliefs about appropriate emotion behavior. On the other hand, children from low expressive families may be more reliant on gender-emotion stereotypes for their beliefs about the acceptability of emotion expressions since all emotions are not openly and frequently expressed in their family. These beliefs may then carry over into the social interactions that children have with their peers and influence the playmate preferences that they make.

Socialization in the Peer Environment

Although children spend a large portion of their time interacting with family members, the time they spend with same-aged peers increases with age. Just as children learn the appropriate expressive behaviors from interacting with family members, it is reasonable to expect that they would also learn expressive display rules from interacting with their peers. Harris (1995, 1998) asserts that the peer environment provides the major source of influence on children's subsequent personality and behaviors, and even asserts that the peer environment is a more powerful socializing force than parents are.

As was previously suggested, two aspects of an emotion expression that may influence how it is socialized are the functional nature of the expression and the consistency of the expression with gender-emotion stereotypes. The different playstyles that exist among boy and girl interactions may also influence the emotion socialization that occurs among peer groups based on gender. Specifically, the playstyles that boys and girls engage in may afford different emotion expressions for each gender. Expressing sadness and fear, which both communicate vulnerability, would not likely be functional in play among boys where competitiveness and

establishing dominance are central interaction goals. However, anger expressions, which communicate dominance, would probably be more adaptive in a boy's interactions with other boys. Contrast this to the playstyles of girls, which are characterized by sharing and cooperative play. Expressing sadness and fear would be compatible in these interactions, whereas expressing anger may conflict with these interaction goals.

Research examining peer socialization in general is not lacking, as ample research has investigated the role of peer socialization of sex-typed play, and in general has found that children do play an important role in shaping their peer's play behaviors (e.g., Fagot, 1977; Fagot & Patterson, 1969; Lamb & Roopnarine, 1979; Lamb, Easterbrooks, & Holden 1980). However, research examining peer socialization of emotion expressions has been lacking. Related research that has examined children's reports of who they prefer expressing their emotions to has found indirect support for the peer socialization premise. Preschoolers report being more likely to express their negative emotions to their mothers and peers than they are likely to express these same emotions to their fathers (Zeman, Penza, Shipman, & Young, 1997). This pattern changes with age so that in middle childhood and early adolescence, children report being more likely to regulate their anger and sad expressions with peers than when they are alone or with their mothers or fathers (Zeman & Garber, 1996). Also, they feel that their peers would not be as accepting of their emotional expressions as their mothers would (Zeman & Garber, 1996). One possibility for this change is because children may feel that they will receive fewer positive peer reactions, with the specific fear of being teased by their peers for their negative or gender non-stereotypic expressions (Saarni, 1993; Underwood, 1997; Zeman & Shipman, 1997).

Although these studies suggest that children are receiving different messages from their peers compared to their family regarding the appropriateness of their emotion expressions, this

has not directly been examined. This study was designed to address this, by investigating whether children do respond differently to hypothetical peers based on their emotion expressions. In addition, this study expands on previous research by taking an exploratory step in examining the role of family expressiveness on children's playmate preferences of emotion-expressing characters.

The following hypotheses were postulated for this study. Based on the basic functional nature of the emotion being expressed and on previous research, happy characters were expected to be preferred over other emotion expressing characters (Barrett, 1993; Glasberg & Aboud, 1981; Rubin & Clark, 1983; Sroufe, Schork, Molti, & LaFreniere, 1984). Sad and fearful story characters were expected to be preferred over angry characters (Barrett, 1993).

Hypotheses were also generated based on gender-emotion stereotypes. Children were expected to indicate higher playmate preferences for characters expressing emotions consistent with gender stereotypes (e.g. Birnbaum, Nosanchuk, and Croll, 1980). Specifically, boys expressing anger were expected to be preferred over boys expressing sadness or fear or girls expressing anger. Girls expressing sadness or fear were expected to be preferred over girls expressing anger or boys expressing sadness or fear. It was also hypothesized that there would be a stronger inhibition of boys' expressions of sadness and fear than of girls' expressions of anger. Specifically, it was expected that boys expressing sadness and fear would be given lower playmate preference ratings than girls expressing anger. This is based on research indicating the stronger inhibition of cross-sex play in boys (Lamb & Roopnarine, 1979).

A final, more exploratory hypothesis was generated concerning the role of family expressiveness in children's playmate preferences. Children from low-expressive families were expected to be more stereotyped in their playmate preferences than those from high-expressive

homes. The rationale behind this hypothesis is that since the expression of emotions is not as frequent in low expressive families, these children may rely more on gender stereotypes for knowledge of acceptable emotion expressions.

Method

Participants

Forty-five preschool children (23 girls, 22 boys) between the ages of 45 months and 80 months, with a mean age of 60 months, participated in this study. Among the participants whose ethnicity was reported, 84% were Caucasian, while 2% were identified as African American and 2% Asian American. Seventy-one percent of the children came from intact homes, while the remaining percentage came from single-parent homes. Sixty-two percent of the mothers from the sample and 69% of the fathers had a college degree or higher.

The children were recruited from six suburban day care centers. At each center, letters describing the study along with two questionnaires were given to parents, asking for their informed consent. Children whose parents gave consent were individually asked if they wanted to participate, and only those that agreed participated in the study. Only two out of 45 invited children refused to participate.

Stimuli

The stimuli used in the study consisted of eight stories used in previous research (Brody & Carter, 1982; Brody & Harrison, 1987; Sorber & Cunningham, 1998). There were two stories designed to elicit each emotion: happy, sad, anger, fear. Each story consisted of four main characters, two of each sex. In the stories, the characters are engaged in a neutral play activity when an outside event occurs which leads to two of the characters (one of each sex) expressing the elicited emotion, while the other boy and girl remain neutral throughout the scenario.

Corresponding line-drawn pictures in which details of the characters' faces are blank were created for this study and shown on one page. Additionally, pictures of the faces showing the emotional reactions of the characters were shown to participants on a separate page and are depicted in the Appendix. These faces were taken and edited from previous research (Walden & Field, 1982; Harris, Boone, & Cunningham, 1993; Sorber & Cunningham, 1998). The stories and pictures were combined in a three-ring binder and presented to the children as a storybook.

The eight stories were first put into random order and then counterbalanced to create four story orders. The version of emotion-expressing faces that accompanied the stories were also randomly assigned; however, two different face pairings were created for each story order to prevent the identity of faces from influencing the children's responses. Therefore, in total there were eight storybooks created for this study. Within each emotion condition, the characters exhibited the same expressions in both stories. Therefore, the four characters in Sad Story Number 1 were also the same in Sad Story Number 2, and their expressions were consistent across the two stories. This was implemented in order to establish a pattern of expressiveness for each story character.

Family Expressiveness Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire and the Family Expressiveness Questionnaire (FEQ; Halberstadt, 1986) were completed by the parents. The FEQ measures how frequently positive and negative emotions are expressed in the family. The questionnaire includes 40 items which parents rated on a nine-point Likert scale (1=not at all frequently in my family; 9=very frequently in my family), and they were asked to answer the questions in terms of their current family situation. This questionnaire has been found to have good discriminant validity in that the measure predicts the ability to pose and identify emotion expressions and facial responsiveness

to others' emotional states (Eisenberg, Fabes, Carlo, Troyer, Speer, Karbon, & Switzer, 1992; Halberstadt, 1986). Internal consistency in the scales has also been indicated by researchers (Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, & Braungart, 1992; Eisenberg et al., 1992).

This questionnaire was administered to parents to assess both overall expressiveness and specific types of emotional expressiveness within a family. To assess overall expressiveness, the total scores on the questionnaire were dichotomized with a median split to create a distinction between low and high expressive families. Regarding the specific types of expressiveness, the original design of the FEQ is such that four subscales (positive and negative dominant emotion and positive and negative submissive emotion) emerge from the items. However, due to the specific emotions being investigated in this study, an alternative method of combining the items was used. This grouping of the individual items results in three subscales, positive emotion, negative submissive and negative dominant emotion, which represent happiness, sadness, and anger, respectively. These subscales have been successfully implemented in other studies (Eisenberg et al., 1992; Garner & Power, 1996; Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994) and were used in this study since the two positive subscales correlated positively with one another, as they have in the other studies that have used this distinction.

Procedure

A female experimenter accompanied each child to a room separate from the main classroom, or in a corner of the classroom. Children participated in the experiment individually. Participants were informed that they would hear a story about children in another class, and would be asked some questions about the story characters. The experimenter then read the stories to participants.

Emotion Identification Task. After reading the storybook, participants were shown laminated faces of the story characters. Since there were several neutral story characters, only two were chosen (one of each sex) to be shown to participants. The faces were presented one at a time, and this order of presentation was counterbalanced across participants. Participants were asked to identify the emotion that the character was feeling. Specifically they were asked the following, if the character name was Jon: "Here's a picture of Jon. Can you tell me how Jon is feeling?" The child's response was recorded, and if it was incorrect, the child was informed of the correct answer.

Playmate Ranking Task. The next task involved participants ranking the ten story characters in order of playmate preference. The ten faces were placed on the table in a randomized spatial order. Two novel expressionless faces, matching the sex of the child, participant were also laid on the table. Participants were told that these two children were in the class and were going to play a game that involved teams. Explanation and examples of team games were provided if children did not understand the concept of teams.

Participants were informed that they needed to help pick team members for these characters. They were told, "When picking teams you want to pick the kids that you really want on your team first since you do not want the other team to get those kids. Kids that you don't want on your team as much are picked later." After answering any questions, participants were asked to pick the first team member for Kevin/Emily's team. Next, they were asked to pick a team member for Steve/Lisa's team. Participants were told to put the face that they chose next to the face of the team leader. Therefore, the choices could be spatially distinguished into two teams. This process of alternating choices continued until all of the story characters were chosen.

The choices were recorded as ranked data, so that the first choice was given a one, the second choice a two, up to ten.

The Like-Dislike Task. In the next task, children were presented with a white 10" x 29" foam board. The length of the board was marked off by 10 black lines, which were spaced two inches apart. The lines were numbered from 1 to 10, and the board was placed perpendicular to the child so that Line 1 was closest to the participant. The participant was then given the following instructions, which were adopted from previous research (Glasberg & Aboud, 1981, pg. 198): "This is a like-dislike board. You use it to show how much you like something. The more you like something, the closer you put it to you on the board. The more you don't like something, the farther away from you put it on the board."

To assess understanding, participants were given various pictures of food and asked to place the picture on the line that indicated how much they liked the food. The food pictures included a picture of pizza, chocolate pudding, a brownie, and cat food. Once it was apparent that participants understood the task, they were reminded of the two children who they picked teams for. They were then instructed that they would be placing the faces on the board to show how much they thought the two team leaders liked the other children in their class. When it was clear that participants understood the task, they were handed one of the story character's face, and asked how much they thought Kevin and Steve (Emily and Lisa) liked the child. The child then placed the face on the board and the corresponding line number (1-10) was recorded and the face was removed from the board. The faces were handed to the participants one-by-one, and the order of the presentation of the faces was random across participants. After completion of this task, the child participants were verbally praised for their work, thanked, and escorted back to their classroom.

Results

Emotion Identification

Before addressing the specific hypotheses, the responses to the emotion identification were examined to see whether participants were successful in identifying the emotions represented in the character's facial expressions. For each of the emotions of happy, angry, and sad, the largest number of participants out of 43 who incorrectly identified the characters' expressions was five, which occurred for the identification of sad boy characters. Four children incorrectly identified happy boy characters, three were incorrect in their angry and sad girl identifications, one was incorrect in identifying angry boy characters, and no children incorrectly identified happy girl characters.

More participants incorrectly identified scared and neutral character expressions, with 26 incorrect responses for neutral boy characters, 15 for neutral girl characters, 14 for scared girl characters, and 10 incorrect responses for scared boy characters. Chi-square analyses were conducted on the correct responses to examine whether they correctly identified the emotions of scared and neutral above chance level. Significant results were found for the number of correctly identified expressions for scared boy, X^2 (1, N = 43) = 12.30, $p < .01$, and girl characters, X^2 (1, N = 43) = 5.23, $p < .01$, and for neutral girl characters, X^2 (1, N = 43) = 3.93, $p < .05$. These results indicate that participants correctly identified the expressions of these characters at a level significantly above chance. However, for the identification of neutral boy expressions these same results did not occur. Children did not identify the neutral boy characters' expressions above chance level. In all cases of incorrect identification, the correct answer was subsequently given to the child.

Emotion Predictions

To examine the hypotheses that happy characters would be preferred over other emotion expressing characters, and sad and fearful story characters would be preferred over angry characters, a 2 (participant sex) x 2 (character sex) x 5 (emotion) mixed ANOVA with repeated measures on the last two factors was conducted on the liking scores. The main effect for participant sex approached significance, with a trend for girls' liking ratings to be higher than boys' ratings, F (1, 35) = 3.42, p = .07. The main effect for emotion, F (4, 32) = 23.94, p < .001, indicated that participants liked happy, neutral, sad, and scared characters more than they liked angry characters (see Table 1). In addition, happy characters were liked more than scared characters, ps < .05. Although the means suggest that happy characters were also liked more than sad and neutral characters, the planned comparison did not reach significance. There were no significant interactions.

Gender Stereotype Preferences

To examine whether children indicated higher playmate preferences for characters expressing emotions consistent with gender stereotypes, data from the ranking and the liking task were examined. To first test to see whether there was a difference between the rank-order given to the story characters, Friedman's multi-sample test for identical treatment effects was conducted (Bradley, 1968). The results from this analysis indicated that across participant sex, similar rankings were not assigned to the ten story characters, X^2 (9, N = 42) = 47.82, p < .01 (see Table 2).

To clarify these differences, planned comparisons were conducted between the hypothesized mean ranks (Gibbons, 1993). The only comparison that reached significance was between sad girls and sad boys. Specifically, sad girls (M = 5.07, SD = 2.78) were chosen as playmates before sad boys (M = 7.12, SD = 2.10) were chosen. The only other comparison that

approached significance was between sad girls and scared boys, $p < .10$. Again, this was in the predicted direction in that there was a trend for sad girls to be chosen before scared boys were chosen. These results provide some support for the hypothesis that children will choose playmates based on gender stereotypes of emotion expressions.

An analysis on the liking data was also conducted to see whether gender stereotype preferences existed. A 2 (participant sex) x 2 (character sex) x 5 (emotion) mixed ANOVA with repeated measures on the last two factors was conducted on the data. If children liked boys and girls who expressed emotions consistent with gender stereotypes, the interaction between character sex and emotion would be significant. However, a significant interaction between these two variables did not occur, $F(4, 32) = 1.18$, $p > .10$.

Family Expressiveness Preferences

Forty-three of 45 parents correctly completed the Family Expressiveness Questionnaire (Halberstadt, 1986). To use the results of the questionnaire for analyses, the questionnaire was scored so that a total expressiveness score, total positive expressiveness score, negative dominant (anger) expressiveness score, and negative submissive (sad) expressiveness score were obtained. As previous research has shown, in order to combine the two positive subscales to create one total positive score the separate subscales must be positively correlated with one another (Eisenberg et al., 1992; Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994; Garner & Power, 1996). The correlation between the positive dominant and positive submissive subscales was significant, $r(44) = .84$, $p < .01$.

To test our hypothesis that children from low expressive homes would be more stereotyped in their playmate choices, separate Friedman's and multiple comparisons were conducted on the two sub-samples that were created by the median split. The Friedman's test

indicated significant results for both groups, low expressive X^2 (9, N = 21) = 34.62, $p < .01$; high expressive X^2 (8, N = 20) = 23.15, $p < .01$. This indicates that participants from both high and low expressive homes differentially ranked the ten story characters. To see whether the rankings were in the predicted direction, multiple planned comparisons were conducted.

The only comparison that was significant for the hypothesized mean ranks was between the ranking for sad girls versus sad boys in the low expressive group, $p < .05$. Children from low expressive homes picked sad boys (M = 7.62, SD = 1.91) much later during the task than they picked sad girls (M = 4.90, SD = 2.34) which is consistent with the gender stereotype. This same comparison, although in the predicted direction, was not significant for children from high expressive homes. Although not significant, it is noteworthy to notice the pattern of means for both groups in the ranking of the angry characters. Children from high expressive families tended to choose angry girls (M = 4.95, SD = 2.96) earlier in the task than they chose angry boys (M = 6.15, SD = 2.70). This same comparison is reversed for children from low expressive homes who tended to choose angry boys (M – 5.81, SD = 3.37) earlier in the task than they chose angry girls (M = 6.38, SD = 3.02). Although these comparisons are not significant, they are in the predicted direction with children from low expressive homes showing choices that were more consistent with gender-emotion stereotypes.

With the liking ratings a 2 (total expressiveness) x 2 (character sex) x 5 (emotion) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Again, if children from low expressive families liked children based on gender stereotypes of emotion expression, then the three-way interaction should be significant. The only effect that reached significance was the previously identified main effect for emotion, F (4, 31) = 24.86, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine how emotion, gender, and family expressiveness influenced children's reactions to the emotion expressions of their peers. The results of the liking task indicated that the nature of the emotion being expressed was more important in children's liking ratings than whether expressions were consistent with gender stereotypes. Consistent with our hypothesis, happy characters were liked more than scared and angry characters were liked, and they were given a higher mean liking value than the value given to sad and neutral characters. Angry children were liked the least, which was also consistent with our hypothesis. There was no divergence in children's liking ratings of angry, sad, or scared children based on the gender of the character expressing the emotion. Therefore, data from the liking task do not support the hypothesis that children would indicate more liking towards characters expressing emotions consistent with gender-emotion stereotypes.

The data from the ranking task provided partial support for the gender-stereotyping hypotheses. Children did make distinctions in the ranking order of the characters. The pattern of some of these distinctions was in the predicted direction. Sad girls were chosen to be on the hypothetical team before sad boys were chosen, and there was a trend for sad girls to be chosen before scared boys were chosen. Although the result was not significant for the comparison between scared girls and scared boys, the data was again in the predicted direction. There was a tendency for scared girls to be chosen before scared boys were chosen. The predicted pattern was not found for angry boys and girls. Across boy and girl participants, similar low rankings were given for angry boy and girl characters. This could again be due to the strong communicative nature of the emotion of anger, with children not liking anger expressions in any of their peers, or it could be consistent with our hypothesis regarding the stronger inhibition of boys' transgressions of gender stereotypes that occurs among preschool children.

The findings regarding the role of family expressiveness in this area are more exploratory, and should be supplemented by more research. We predicted that children from low expressive environments would be more stereotyped in their playmate preferences. Partial support was found for this as children from low expressive homes did choose sad girls earlier in the task than they chose sad boys. This comparison was not significant in the high expressive group, although it was in the predicted direction.

In total, this study suggests that parents are not the only agents who socialize emotion expressions in children. A child's own peer group provides information regarding which emotions are appropriate to express, and in general these seem to be based on the communicative nature of the emotion being expressed. Especially among the liking ratings, it was the nature of the emotion that drove children's choices, not the combination of gender and emotion. This is consistent with the social-regulatory function of emotion proposed in the functional perspective of emotions (Barrett, 1993). The expression of emotion communicates a message to others, and this message seems to be rather important to children at this age, regardless of the sex of the child expressing the emotion. One may argue that children were only capable of focusing on one aspect of the characters, i.e. emotion, due to cognitive limitations; however, this does not seem plausible as children did consider both aspects during the ranking task.

In addition to socializing emotion expressions based solely on emotion, partial support was found to suggest that at this age children are also beginning to socialize expressions that are consistent with gender-emotion stereotypes. Although this was not found in the liking data, the ranking data did reveal this. However, the results were limited and suggest future research to address this. Socialization attempts based on both gender and emotion may be emerging at this age and may increase in frequency with development. Another possibility is that children at this

age do communicate to each other the importance of adhering to the stereotypes, but not in the way that this methodology assessed. The methodology in this study was designed to assess children's playmate preferences and how much liking they had for other children based on the emotions they were expressing. However, maybe children at this age engage in more subtle forms of socializing. They may make verbal comments to children expressing emotions that are not consistent with the stereotypes, or they may nonverbally communicate their lack of acceptance. For example, if a boy is expressing sadness, other children may make less or more eye contact with him; they may turn away from him, or use other nonverbal behaviors to communicate their disapproval.

These two possibilities could be investigated with future research. Also, the role of family expressiveness is something that needs further clarification. Some evidence was found for differences in children's responses based on family expressiveness; however, this was only found in the ranking data. This variable seems to be an important individual difference variable that may impact several aspects of children's emotional lives. By continuing with more research examining a child's peer group as an important source in the socialization of emotion expressions, we will only gain more understanding into the emotional lives of children.

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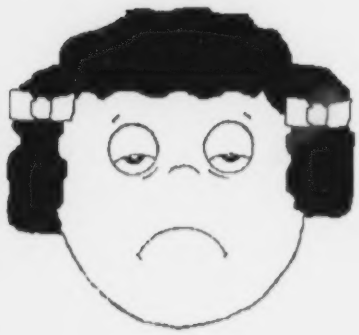
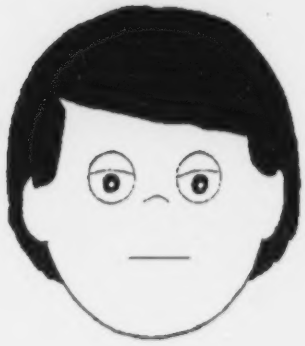
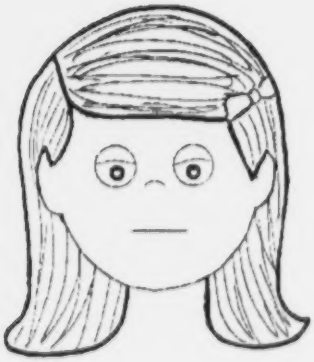
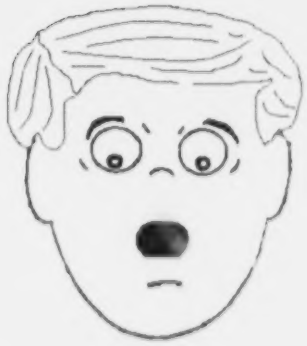
Appendix

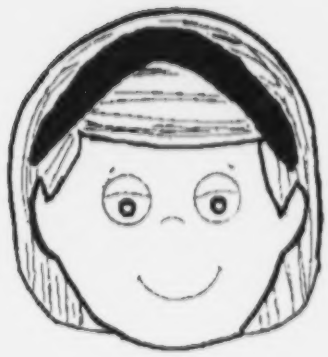


Table 1

Mean Liking Ratings of Characters Based on Emotion

Emotion	Mean	Standard Deviation
Happy	8.64 [a]	1.78
Neutral	7.07 [b]	2.31
Sad	6.76 [b]	2.56
Scared	6.51 [b]	2.90
Angry	3.77 [c]	2.71

Note. Liking ratings range from 1-10 with higher values indicating more liking. Means that do not share the same subscript differ at $p < .05$ in the Tukey honestly significant difference comparison.

Table 3

Mean Rankings of Characters Based on Emotion and Character Sex

	Character Sex	
Emotion	Girl	Boy
Happy	3.93 (2.71)	4.00 (2.56)
Neutral	6.02 (2.80)	4.81 (2.74)
Angry	5.67 (3.01)	5.98 (2.99)
Sad	5.07 (2.78)	7.12 (2.10)
Scared	5.52 (2.59)	6.88 (2.79)

Note. Rankings could range from 1-10, with lower values indicating a higher playmate preference. Standard deviations are in parentheses.